

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:02 p.m. on Wednesday, April 21, 2004, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Faulk.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Botello, Faulk, Horwich, LaBouff, Uchima and Vice-Chair Muratsuchi.

Absent: Chairperson Drevno.

Also Present: Sr. Planning Associate Lodan, Planning Assistant Santana, Deputy City Attorney Whitham, Fire Marshal Carter, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Building Regulations Administrator Segovia and Planning Associate Kim.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to grant Chairperson Drevno an excused absence from this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS

None.

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Vice-Chair Muratsuchi explained the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

7. **CONTINUED HEARINGS**

None.

8. **WAIVERS**

None.

9. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

9A. **MOD04-00006: KOSEI YOSHIDA**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP93-00028) to allow the on-site service and consumption of beer and wine for an existing restaurant on property located in the Hawthorne boulevard Corridor Specific Plan Zone Meadow Park Sub-district at 22833 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Santana introduced the request.

Kosei Yoshida, applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the approval of MOD04-00006, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Faulk and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Drevno).

Planning Assistant Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-039.

MOTION: Commissioner Faulk moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-039. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Drevno).

9B. **CUP04-00006, DIV04-00005: EVERGREEN RETAIL GROUP, LLC (RUSSEL PERKINS)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a drive-through pharmacy and a Division of Lot to allow the consolidation of two lots into one lot on property located in the C-2 Zone at 4124 Pacific Coast Highway.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Santana introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of correspondence from the applicant and an additional recommended condition of approval.

Russell Perkins, representing Evergreen Development, 2920 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix, Arizona, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval with the exception of Condition No. 18, requiring that the applicant agree, in writing, to abandon their portion of the westerly driveway along Pacific Coast Highway if and when the adjacent property to the west recycles. He explained that the applicant feels the language in the condition does not provide sufficient protection to ensure that convenient access to the site will be maintained and submitted an alternate condition for consideration.

Associate Civil Engineer Symons advised that the condition was included because the City would eventually like to close the westerly driveway due to its proximity to the intersection. He explained that with the alternate condition, the applicant was attempting to protect a future easement over the property to the west, but staff was not comfortable reserving an easement when there was no project before the Commission to attach it to.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan stated that staff would like to retain the conditions as drafted, noting that Condition No. 10 – requiring the applicant to establish an easement to allow cross access between the subject property and properties to the south and west at such time those properties redevelop and establish similar easements – was included to ensure that access between the properties is maintained.

Mr. Perkins pointed out that the condition does not secure access from Anza to the subject property and expressed concerns that having only one driveway would hinder on-site circulation for delivery trucks and discourage customers.

In response to Commissioner Botello, Mr. Perkins confirmed that parking lot lighting would be designed so as not to intrude on residential neighbors and provided clarification regarding the exterior of the building. Commissioner Botello suggested the possibility of extending the porch on the west elevation further south to break up the expanse of the west side of the building, and Mr. Perkins expressed his willingness to work with staff on this issue.

Commissioner Faulk asked about the speaker system for the drive-through and the pharmacy's hours. Mr. Perkins reported that a sound study determined that the speaker box was barely audible at a distance of 50 feet; that it could not be heard over ambient noise at 75 feet; and that it would not impact the condominium development to the south, which is at least 85 feet away. He indicated that the pharmacy would be open 24 hours a day.

Commissioner Botello asked about the ingress and egress of delivery trucks. Mr. Perkins advised that while there was plenty of room for trucks to navigate, he was

not sure what path they would take. He noted that trucks deliver during normal business hours and there are typically only 2-3 deliveries a week.

Commissioner Faulk stated that he would like to see landscaping extended on the west and north sides of the building. Mr. Perkins provided a copy of the landscape plan, noting that it includes increased landscaping in the setback along Pacific Coast Highway and vine planters on the west side of the building. He explained that there would be no landscaping on the east side because of the activities that will take place there.

Commissioner Uchima questioned whether the applicant attempted to obtain an easement from the property owner to the west. Mr. Perkins reported that contact was made, but the property owner was not willing to negotiate an easement, which heightened the applicant's fears about the potential redevelopment of the property and the closure of the Anza driveway.

Mr. Green, representing Reliable Properties, landlord for the subject property, noted his support for the applicant's position, maintaining that one driveway would be inadequate to service Walgreens along with buildings in the area and the condominium development to the south.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan reiterated staff's position that Condition No. 18 should be retained as drafted, stating that it was highly unlikely that the property to the west would be redeveloped without a driveway on Anza to which Walgreens would have access.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich, seconded by Commissioner Botello, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved for the approval of CUP04-00006 and DIV04-00005, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, adding a condition requiring landscaping on the north and west building walls. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Drevno).

Planning Assistant Santana read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-040 and 04-041.

MOTION: Commissioner Faulk moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-040 and 04-041 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Drevno).

For the benefit of the applicant, Commissioner Faulk noted that McDonalds at 182nd Street and Crenshaw offers a good example of exterior lighting that meets security needs without impacting nearby residents.

9C. DIV04-00009: CITY OF TORRANCE

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Division of Lot to allow a Lot Line Adjustment involving Zamperini Way (Aero Way) and Lot 51 of Official Map No. 2 as per map filed in Book 5, pages 44 to 52 on property located in the C-3 Zone at 3233 Pacific Coast Highway.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Santana introduced the request.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan reported on the proposal to vacate the easterly portion of Zamperini Way, to be brought before the City Council on April 27, 2004, and explained that the proposed Division of Lot would help facilitate it. He noted that the realignment of Zamperini Way will improve security at Torrance Airport by offsetting the northbound lane so that it will not be in direct alignment with the air traffic control tower.

Barry Jay, 2514 Brian Avenue, President of Torrance Airport Association, voiced objections to the proposed Division of Lot. He maintained that the realignment of Zamperini Way would not enhance security at the airport and disputed staff's contention that the reduction in lanes would not adversely impact traffic. He stated that traffic is gridlocked in the area during rush hour; that the Robinson Helicopter expansion, which is nearing completion, will further increase traffic; and that the proposed elimination of a lane on Zamperini Way would only exacerbate the problem. He further stated that Zamperini Way was designed to showcase Torrance Airport and the General Aviation Center (GAC) in order to promote interaction between the general public and the flying community and closing a portion of it off would defeat the purpose. He urged the Commission to reject the proposal to turn over a portion of Zamperini Way to the Mercedes dealership.

Charles Spurrell, 609 Yarmouth Road, Palos Verdes Estates, contended that the security element of this proposal was totally irrelevant because while the northbound lane of Zamperini Way is currently aligned with the control tower, there is a driveway, a parking lot, landscaping and another parking lot prior to the control tower.

Referring to a letter from Congressman Dana Rohrabacher dated February 27, 2004, Mr. Spurrell reported that Congressman Rohrabacher has initiated an investigation into claims that the City of Torrance violated terms of the Surplus Property Act by charging non-residents a higher hangar rental rate than residents. He indicated that the investigation was expected to take 60 days and suggested that any decision about airport land be delayed until this matter has been resolved.

Deputy City Attorney Whitham advised that the City received a letter from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) dated late March or early April, which indicates that the investigation launched in response to several issues raised by local pilots determined that the City has not violated any terms of its agreement with the federal government and that the only remaining restriction, aside from one related to fissionable materials, is that the airport be used for airport purposes. She offered to provide a copy of the letter to Mr. Spurrell, noting that the letter was sent to Jim Gates.

Mr. Spurrell stated that he has a copy of that letter and it does not address the issue he was referring to.

Commissioner Botello, echoed by Commissioner Horwich, stated that he did not believe the issue of hangar rental rates was relevant to the land use matter before the Commission.

Commissioner Horwich asked who had made the determination that the realignment of Zamperini Way would improve airport security. Sr. Planning Associate Lodan related his understanding that it was the City's Emergency Preparedness (E-Prep) Team.

Noting that he is very familiar with this area, John King, 2421 227th Street, reported that traffic is quite heavy at certain times of the day and Zamperini Way is the only street left that does not back up. He noted that no documentation was presented to support staff's assessment that the vacation would not have an adverse impact due to low traffic volume. He stated that the proposal to realign Zamperini Way was completely at odds with the security plan presented to the Airport Commission by the E-Prep Team, which called for a straight access to make it easier for trucks, not the dogleg being proposed. He further stated that auto dealerships use Zamperini Way to unload vehicles from carrier trucks and they will block the roadway if one of the lanes is taken away. Urging denial of the proposal, he contended that reducing the size of this street was bad planning.

Commissioner Botello recalled that the airport is intended to serve as a staging area in the event of a natural disaster/earthquake and suggested that making the roadway leading into it smaller could hinder that. Mr. King agreed, noting that it could also impede Fire Department access.

Associate Civil Engineer Symons noted that traffic data would be included in the staff report submitted to the City Council in conjunction with the proposed vacation of Zamperini Way. He reported that the existing level of service on Zamperini Way is "A" and that even after narrowing the street and adding a 20% growth factor to account for the Robinson Helicopter project and the Mercedes dealership expansion, it is projected to remain at the upper end of an "A" level of service.

Nancy Clinton, 2785 Pacific Coast Highway, noted that additional construction is pending in the area of the GAC, which includes two phases of Flite Park scheduled to begin later this year and in 2006, as well as a proposed multi-level parking structure just west of Zamperini Way to be used by auto dealerships to store vehicles. She urged that the traffic impact of these future projects also be considered.

Jack Kenton, representing California Pilots Association, stated that Zamperini Way, as currently configured, makes a good entrance to the airport and invites public interaction and that narrowing it would have an adverse impact. He contended that the control tower was an unlikely target of terrorists and suggested that a shopping mall presents a much greater security risk. He noted that the staff report mentions that no property owners had expressed concerns about the proposal, but pointed out that the 300-foot notification area consists mainly of auto dealerships and only a few residences.

Noting that he flies from Torrance Airport to Chino on a daily basis, Ross Anderson, Rolling Hills Estates, stated that narrowing Zamperini Way at a time of increased growth in the area would be counterproductive and that it would wind up being a choke point.

Don Ferrara, Rancho Palos Verdes, a longtime tenant at Torrance Airport, voiced his opinion that narrowing the street would do a disservice to war hero Louis Zamperini;

contended that it would hinder traffic in the area; and suggested that Zamperini Way should be landscaped and beautified instead of being narrowed.

William Parker expressed his objections to the proposal, stating that he thought narrowing the street would be a slap in the face to Louis Zamperini.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Faulk, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Commissioner Faulk indicated that he would not support the proposal because, from a logic standpoint, it made no sense to reduce the capacity of an existing street anywhere in the City in view of the current traffic situation and the City's potential for growth; and from a business perspective, he believed it would be to the City's advantage to maintain an attractive, open area leading into the airport to call attention to it. He stated that he has personally observed a high volume of traffic in the area at certain times of the day, particularly at the end of Robinson Helicopter's shift, and that he was not convinced that airport security would be significantly improved by realigning Zamperini Way.

Commissioner Botello voiced his opinion that the benefits associated with this proposal – a slight improvement in airport security and the income the City would gain from leasing the vacated land to the Mercedes dealership – are outweighed by the negatives. He noted that the narrowing of the roadway could hinder access to the airport in the event of a natural disaster; impede the flow of traffic; and take away an opportunity to showcase the airport. He agreed that it would be a disservice to Louis Zamperini to narrow the street that was named after him.

Commissioner Uchima stated that he had heard a lot of compelling testimony, therefore, he had decided not to support the proposed Division of Lot.

Voicing support for the proposal, Commissioner LaBouff stated that having reviewed all the documents and listened to the testimony, he had not heard any arguments that would cause him to change his mind.

Commissioner Muratsuchi stated that he was reluctant to reduce the capacity of any street in Torrance and that he would have liked to have seen the traffic data on which staff's assessment was based. He further stated that he would have been inclined to give more weight to the security issue, if he had been provided with information to support the claim that realigning the street would enhance security.

MOTION: Commissioner Faulk moved to deny DIV04-00009. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by a 4-1 roll call vote with Commissioner LaBouff dissenting and Commissioner Horwich abstaining (absent Chairperson Drevno).

Commenting on his abstention, Commissioner Horwich indicated that he did not feel he had enough information to vote on this matter.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan noted that a resolution for denial would be brought back for the Commission's approval at the next meeting.

9D. ZON04-00003: CITY OF TORRANCE – GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Zone Change from A-1 (Light Agricultural District) to R-1 (Single-Family Residential District) on 60 properties throughout the City for the purpose of bringing consistency between the zoning and the General Plan. Fifty-nine (59) of the properties are currently developed with single-family homes and one property is vacant.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Associate Kim introduced the request.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Planning Associate Kim stated that she did not believe the rezoning would increase property values, however, it would result in less confusion when a property is sold; reported that there are no agricultural uses on any of the properties under consideration; and indicated that properties developed with single-family homes are already subject to R-1 guidelines in terms of raising livestock.

A resident at 16945 Van Ness, name inaudible/no speaker card, questioned the need for the change. Planning Associate Kim explained that it was a matter of cleaning up City records, making the zoning consistent with the General Plan and the actual use.

A resident at 3969 W. 186th Street, name inaudible/no speaker card, questioned whether the land under the power lines was being rezoned for residential use, and Planning Associate Kim advised that there are no plans to rezone the right-of-way.

Florence Huang, 25612 Rolling Hills Way, owner of one of the affected properties, asked about the impact on remodeling and property taxes. Planning Associate Kim stated that the rezoning would have no impact on property taxes and explained that if a home was substantially remodeled, it would have to meet current R-1 standards. She noted that the R-1 standards are available in the Community Development Department and on the City's website and offered to provide Ms. Huang with a copy.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to recommend that the City Council approve ZON04-00003. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Botello and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Chairperson Drevno).

10. RESOLUTIONS

None.

11. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS

None.

12. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

None.

13. REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan reviewed recent City Council action on Planning Matters, noting that the hotel on Torrance Boulevard was approved at the April 13 Council meeting.

14. REVIEW OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan reviewed the agenda for the Planning Commission meeting of May 5, 2004.

15. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

15A. Commissioner Botello questioned whether anyone from Planning staff would be attending a seminar at the University of Wisconsin, noting that topics include the recycling of obsolete shopping centers, regulating "big box" stores, and growth management. Sr. Planning Associate Lodan advised that no one would be attending, however, staff would be interested if such topics were covered locally.

15B. Referring to a case to be considered at the next meeting, a condominium development on the former site of the Vagabond Motel, Commissioner Botello requested that Commissioners be provided with information concerning any visits staff has made to investigate claims of view impairment. He also requested information regarding the guidelines for basements.

16. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, May 5, 2004, at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Written June 2, 2004 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk (lc)
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